

The Bolshoi Theatre Большой театр in Moscow Russia.



In 1776 Catherine II granted Prince Peter Ouroussoff a licence to organise theatrical performances, balls and other forms of entertainment. Ouroussoff set up the theatre in collaboration with English tightrope walker Michael Maddox. Initially, it held performances in a private home, but it acquired the Petrovka Theatre and on 30 December 1780, it began producing plays and operas, thus establishing what would become the Bolshoi Theatre. Fire destroyed the Petrovka Theatre on 8 October 1805, and the New Arbat Imperial Theatre replaced it on 13 April 1808, however it also succumbed to fire during the French invasion of Moscow in 1812.

The first instance of the theatre was built between 1821 and 1824, designed and supervised to completion by architect Joseph Bové based upon an initial competition-winning design created by Petersburg-based Russian architect Andrei Mikhailov that was deemed too costly to complete. Bové also concurrently designed the nearby Maly Theatre and the surrounding Theater Square. The new building opened on 18 January 1825 as the Bolshoi Petrovsky Theatre with a performance of Fernando Sor's ballet, *Cendrillon*. Initially, it presented only Russian works, but foreign composers entered the repertoire around 1840.

The Bolshoi has been the site of many historic premieres, including: Tchaikovsky's *The Voyevoda* and *Mazeppa*, Modest Mussorgsky's one version of *Boris Godunov* was given on 16 December 1888, Rachmaninoff's *Aleko* and *Francesca da Rimini*, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *The Maid of Pskov*, with Feodor Chaliapin singing the role of Ivan the Terrible, Dmitri Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* in 1935.

The first symphonic concert by the Bolshoi Orchestra took place at the Bolshoi Theatre on 4 May 1919, conducted by Serge Koussevitzky, Leonid Sobinov, Antonina Nezhdanova, Ksenia Dzerzhinskaya, Galina Vishnevskaya, and dozens of other outstanding opera singers have performed at the Bolshoi.

In 2000, the Bolshoi Ballet opened its first Ballet Academy outside Russia, in Joinville, Brazil. The Bolshoi Ballet remains one of the world's foremost ballet companies, in addition to being one of the largest, with approximately 220 dancers. In 2000, the Bolshoi Ballet opened its first Ballet Academy outside Russia, in Joinville, Brazil.

